

New Wine into Fresh Wine-Skins

Kazufumi Yagi, Dean of College

The Research Institute of Kobe College was founded in 1954 as the organization that promotes the academic activities of college teachers. It is a great pleasure for us to be able to publish a special issue of *Kobe College Studies* in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of our institute.

Kobe College has placed emphasis on Christianity and international spirit as the foundation of its liberal education, taking its models from typical liberal-arts colleges in New England such as Amherst, Mount Holyoke, and Smith College.

Taking into account the differences between Japanese and Western universities due to the circumstances peculiar to each, we have tried to promote liberal education within a context true to Japan. To do this we have felt it important to cultivate a firm spiritual basis for substantial achievements in research and education.

Interdisciplinary studies are the recent trend in the academic world; and I myself study one: biochemistry, a new field made out of the combination of biology and chemistry, established in the latter half of the twentieth century. Earlier, physics and chemistry cooperated to create physical chemistry and chemical physics. The combination of physics and biology, however, was much delayed, and it is only during the last twenty years that biophysics was established as a discipline.

In addition to such cooperations in the natural sciences, interdisciplinary studies have become popular and developed in complexity in the field of humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, social needs have urged the combination of natural sciences with humanities and social sciences, to create such interdisciplinary fields as ecology, life science, and human science.

In this age of interdisciplinary studies, we have to develop a new way of thinking, unlimited by the old, conventional disciplines, in order to cope with modern situations. We need “new wine-skins” to hold “new wine.” There is, however, one thing that we have to keep in mind. Each one of us must gain a unique and firm standpoint as a researcher. Without an individual identity accomplished in a particular field of study, there will be no true interdisciplinary studies because they are only possible when each participant can contribute special knowledge and skill from his own major field of study, just as a true international harmony can be achieved only when each country concerned maintains its sovereignty and respects its national interests. Now is the time to beware of the prostitution of learning.